

LOG CABIN TAVERN.
BLEVINS, ARK.

Hempstead Co.

HABS. 32-10.

HABS
ARK.

29-BLEV

1

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA.
DISTRICT No 32.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY.
LAWSON L. DELONY. DISTRICT OFFICER.
807 SOUTHERN BLDG. LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

LOG CABIN TAVERN
Blevins, Hempstead County
ArkansasHISTORY:

Located at Blevins, Hempstead County, Arkansas. The Old Tavern was built about a hundred yards from the Old Chihuahua Trail or Military Road - by Hugh Armstrong Blevins in 1820. The building is constructed of logs and hand hewn timbers put together by pegs, - as there are no nails used in the building at all. It is two stories high, having a circular stair in the open hallway running from the 1st to 2nd floor. It formally contained fire places at each end of the building, but these have fallen away, and at the present time the building is in a run-down condition, although the original logs are in pretty good state of preservation.

This Chihuahua Trail ran from Chickashaw Bluffs, now called Memphis, to Chihuahua, Mexico, crossing the Red River at Fulton, continued West through Texas to El Paso and thence south to Chihuahua and was used by the Spaniards while Arkansas and Texas were claimed by Spain. Before the acquisition of Arkansas by the United States, that part of the territory now comprising Arkansas and other States was what was known as Louisiana Territory; first, it was claimed by France during the reign of the Grand Monarch, Louis XIV. In about 1760 this Louisiana Territory was ceded by France to Spain, and remained Spanish Territory until about 1798, when Napoleon forced Spain to cede it to France; in 1803, Napoleon, as the Emperor of France, sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States, and it has been an United States possession every since. Up to the treaty between Spain and the United States in 1819, Spain claimed the western half of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri River, and up to that time it was supposed that the Western half of Arkansas was Spanish territory. In 1819, during the administration of President Monroe, Spain and the United States entered into a treaty, copy of which I have read, in regard to the boundary of the Louisiana Purchase, and that boundary, according to the treaty, fixed the West boundary line of the Louisiana Purchase as follows:

Beginning at the mouth of the Sabine River, and up the west bank thereof to where that river crosses the 32nd degree, west longitude; thence north to Red River; thence up Red River to the 100 meridian, west longitude; thence north to the Arkansas River; thence up the Arkansas River to its source. This changed the possession of Western Arkansas into United States Territory. This boundary goes through the present town of Texarkana.

Fulton, Arkansas, was supposed to be at the head of navigation on Red River, and was evidently a trading post long before 1820.

Settlers began going into Hempstead County long prior to 1820, evidently they did not know where the boundary line was between Spanish Territory and that of the United States.

Some of the old settlers in Hempstead County, along this trail from Memphis to Fulton, in Hempstead County, came there prior to 1820. In my recollection I knew some of them. I well remember the two Moss brothers, who settled in Hempstead County, according to their statements, prior to 1820; Captain William Moss, who was one of them, lived until 1880, and is buried in the old cemetery at Washington. Arkansas became a part of the Missouri Territory prior to 1820, and territorial court was held in the neighborhood of Blevins. One of the pioneers was a man by the name of Blevins, and from the current history which I gathered, as a boy, this man, Blevins, constructed this old two story house which you possess sometime about 1820, and the house is built within 100 yards of this old Chihuahua Trail. In about 1831 or '32, President Andrew Jackson transported the Choctaw, Chickashaw and Seminole Indians from Memphis by way of this trail, and the Government improved this old Chickashaw Trail, and these Indians were transported by Military escort down this trail, and they passed by this Blevins residence, and went as far down the trail as Washington, and then turned west and went by Columbus and on into the southern portion of the Indian Territory. The name of this Chihuahua Trail was then changed to the Military Road, and was commonly designated as such until long after the Iron Mountain Railroad was built. This Trail became the most important trail in the State of Arkansas. A vast quantity of Indians passed down it with Military escort, and it was a mail route in that early day, evidently as early as 1830. The Blevins house became, as I gathered, a stage stand, and a resort for travelers going down this trail into Texas. The old settlers told me that David Crockett, on his way to Texas, was entertained in this Blevins home. It was not only a stage stand but a way side inn. I have read in history where Sam Houston fomented the Texas revolution while sojourning in Hempstead County, Arkansas; that was about 1834.

In 1846 the United States declared war on Mexico; a part of the army that went to Mexico passed down this trail on their way to Mexico.

I have talked to old settlers who knew the facts above stated, and knew Sam Houston, James Bowie, and David Crockett, and who saw the pioneers pass down this road going to Texas to engage in the Texas Revolution of 1836; and also, who knew and saw the United States soldiers go down this trail on their way to Mexico, and on their return. General John C. Brackenridge commanded a division of United States troops that passed over that Military road, just in front of this old Blevins home.

In 1849, when the gold rush to California began, the California pioneers who went through from the Southern States, passed this way, and it is still called the "Military Road" in Arkansas, but when it reached the Texas line they changed the name to California Trail, and it was used all the way from Memphis to Fulton, and still denominated the Military Road through Arkansas.

During the War between the States the Texas Soldiers used this Military road going into the army. They not only used it in going into the army but they used it in returning.

I, myself, when a small boy, saw some of these Texas troops passing along this Military road. At the close of the war between the States, the Federal Government used this same trail, and sent an army down this trail and established a military post at Washington, and the Federal army that occupied northern Texas passed down this trail, and the Federal Government used this trail as a military road for a number of years. After the war between the states, the Americans passing into North Texas used this trail until long after the building of the Iron Mountain Railroad in 1872.

Long prior to 1850 this trail was used as a stage route, and that was kept up except during the four years of the war, until about 1872, when the railroad was built, but the Americans to Texas used it for 8 or 10 years after the said railroad was built. This military road was used by the Federal Government as a stage and mail route to California from along about 1851 until the beginning of the war between the States, and after the war was over it was used again as a mail route to California for many years.

I am giving you the history of this old Military trail, to show you what an important highway this was in the early days, and thereby how important this old Blevins house was to civilization from the early '20's up to 1872. There was no town or place for travelers to stop for many miles on either side of this Blevins homestead, and when I was a boy it was referred to frequently as one of the important points along this old military road, and it was also referred to as a stage stand and wayside inn; of course, after 1872 it lost its importance, but it still stands as a monument of the early settlement of the southwest, and it is the oldest structure that I know of in Hempstead County.

As I remember, it was constructed at such an early date there was not a nail used in the building of it.

Families moving westward - moved down this trail and often camped in their covered wagons at the spring across the road from the house. David Crockett, a personal friend of Mr. Blevins, spent a week here enjoying the hunting, especially deer, under the leadership of a skilled Indian guide whom Mr. Blevins employed to act as a guide. Gen. Goode of the Confederate Army was entertained here during the war. It was here that a Federal Army officer told Mrs. Blevins that the South made a mistake by not keeping the U. S. Flag instead of adopting another. He said that he and hundreds of other men who were fighting on the side of the North, would have fought on the side of the South if the Confederacy had kept the Country's Flag; that the only reason they were fighting on the Northern side was because they felt honor bound to stand by their Flag.

Hugh Armstrong Blevins (known as Hugh A. Blevins) the owner of the home, although too young to go to war (he was about 15 or 16) was a sergeant in the War of 1812 and fought in the Battle of New Orleans under Andrew Jackson.

Mr. Blevins' 3 sons fought for the Confederacy. His father, Armstead Blevins, was in the war 1812. Mrs. Blevins' father Col. Abel Willis, was in the war of 1812. Her brother Fleming Willis was killed in the Battle of Cerro Gordo during the Mexican War.

Many other prominent people, # prominent socially, politically, and nationally, were entertained in the Elevins' home.

Source of information:

Mrs. Charlean Moss Williams, Washington, Arkansas.

A. H. Carrigan, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Laura Bishop, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Lawson L. Delony

Reviewed 1936, A.C.F.

LOG CABIN TAVERN
Blevins, Hempstead County
Arkansas

ARCHITECTURAL NOTES:

The walls of the tavern are built of six inch pine logs of variable heights put together with pegs; split boards and mud fill the cracks between the logs. The hallways at both floors are exposed to the open air at the front and the rear of the building. A circular stairway without hand-rails connects the two halls.

Traces of former outside chimneys at each end of the building can be seen on the drawings. The second floor windows are very small and were placed only on the front.

By Henry Charles Forman
1936